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TAGS: PREL PHUM CASC AE

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES SHAYKH ISSA CASE WITH MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR

Classified by Ambassador Richard Olson, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Ref: A) ABU DHABI 481, B) ABU DHABI 423, C) 06 ABU DHABI 3393

¶1. (C) During a 1 June meeting with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior Shaykh Saif bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, Ambassador raised the case of Shaykh Issa. Ambassador said that the tapes showing the incident with the Afghan merchant were shocking, and the USG welcomed the decision to conduct a review, but noted concerns that the incident could have an impact on the UAE's reputation in the US, particularly on Capitol Hill.

¶2. (C) Shaykh Saif agreed that the tapes were "very shocking" and said that the UAE had taken legal action against Shaykh Issa, because the UAE was a country of laws. Secondarily, the UAE was concerned about its international reputation. From the Government's perspective, Shaykh Issa was just "a citizen of the UAE" to whom all laws applied. The issue had been difficult for the Nahyan family as a family (Issa is Saif's half brother), but as government officials, the course of action had been clear.

¶3. (C) Shaykh Saif said that one aspect of the case that disturbed him was the allegations of Amcit Bassam Nabulsi regarding the UAE court case against him. (Note: Nabulsi was detained on April 6, 2005 under investigation for fraud/theft related to his position as the general manager of Shaykh Issa's private office. He was eventually convicted of possession of restricted drugs, fined AED 10,000 [USD 2,730] and deported. End note.) Shaykh Saif said he had reviewed the case, and found it to be "100 percent (actually 101 percent) correct" in terms of process. Saif said Nabulsi alleged that Shaykh Issa and Shaykh Saif had beaten him in prison. This was false, and the proof of this was that the US Embassy would have protested any mistreatment of an American Citizen, and there was no record of American protest. Ambassador replied that he could not discuss our private discussions with our citizens, but that the Minister was correct that we assiduously protested cases of mistreatment when we became aware of them. (Note: Nabulsi never made any claims of mistreatment during his regular interactions with consular officials. These allegations were brought to the Embassy's attention more than a year later, as reported ref C. End note.)

¶4. (C) Ambassador concluded by urging Shaykh Saif to keep the Embassy informed as the judicial process against Shaykh Issa proceeded. Saif promised that he would.

OLSON